

Physical Therapists (PTs) help patients who are disabled by illness or an accident or who were born with a development disability. Physical therapists plan and carry out programs to help these individuals gain strength, flexibility, endurance, coordination and overall physical functioning. They also provide programs to lessen pain and to prevent injury. Currently licensed physical therapists can have a clinical entry-level degree at the bachelor's, master's or doctoral level. There are six accredited physical therapy educational programs in the state.

North Carolina shows a steady increase in the ratio of PTs per 10,000 population but has remained below the nation for the entire time period (Figure 71). Physical therapists tend to practice in metropolitan areas of the state (Figure 72). Despite recent gains in the supply of PTs in whole-county PHPSAs, part-county and non-PHPA counties have had, on average since 1979, three to four times the numbers of physical therapists per 10,000 people than whole-county PHPSAs (Figure 73).

There is a large concentration of PTs per population in the counties in southwestern North Carolina, several counties along the I-40 corridor, and a few counties in the eastern part of the state (Figure 74). Four counties, Camden, Gates, Perquimans and Tyrell, had no PTs in 2005. Fifty-seven counties increased their supply of PTs relative to population, including two, Anson and Greene, that had no active PTs in 2001. Gates County lost its only PT by 2005 (Figure 75).

Table 15: Summary Statistics for Physical Therapists in North Carolina

PTs per 10,000 Population		Total Active PTs	
1979:	1.16	1979:	677
2001:	3.87	2001:	3,168
2005:	4.33	2005:	3,749

Number of Physical Therapists per 10,000 Population in 2005

Metropolitan Areas:	4.96
Nonmetropolitan Areas:	2.91

For the 11 counties designated as whole county PHPSAs*: 1.69
 For the 27 counties designated as part county PHPSAs*: 3.93
 For the 62 counties not designated as PHPSAs*: 4.67

County Level Data

of counties increasing PT supply, 2001-2005: 57
 # of counties decreasing PT supply, 2001-2005: 40
 # of counties with no PTs in 2005: 4

*Persistent Health Professional Shortage Area